

Rural Abandoned Mine Program



Charles Mills, the landowner on this project stated that, "before we became involved with the RAMP project, we had a place that was heavily used for fishing, swimming, and partying. Also, there was a fatality when a car ran off State Highway 9 that runs parallel to one of the pits on our land. The RAMP eliminated an extremely dangerous situation."

The Charles Mills Rural Abandoned Mine Program project (pictured above and to the right), involved reclaiming an abandoned mine pit and spoils covering over 46 acres of land. The pit ran parallel to State Highway 9, causing it be a hazard to traffic safety.



photos: NRCS Oklahoma

Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP)

Authorization/Purpose

The Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP) is authorized by Section 406 of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 for the purpose of reclaiming the soil and water resources of rural lands adversely affected by past coal mining practices.

All active coal mining operators pay into the Abandoned Mine Reclamation fund at a rate of 35 cents per ton of coal produced from surface mining and 15 cents per ton of coal produced by underground mining. The fees are deposited in a trust fund, which is used to pay reclamation costs of Abandoned Mine Land projects. The current unappropriated balance of the trust fund is over \$1 billion. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) RAMP Program has not been funded since 1995.

Authorized Counties in Oklahoma



Oklahoma Program

The RAMP program is authorized for 16 counties in eastern Oklahoma. More than half of the 30,000 acres of abandoned mine lands in Oklahoma exist in Rogers County. Between 1980 and 1997, fifty-two land user contracts have been developed in Oklahoma, reclaiming 1,102 acres of abandoned strip coal mines at a cost of \$5.5 million. These projects were located in Sequoyah, Rogers, Haskell, Latimer, LeFlore and Muskogee Counties. RAMP projects have eliminated many safety hazards and areas that have severe soil erosion and water quality problems.

Coordination and Partnership

Oklahoma is only one of two states in the nation where local citizens through conservation districts lead both Rural Abandoned Mine and the state Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Programs. The Natural Resources Conservation Service works closely with districts to coordinate these programs to best meet the needs of the state. The Oklahoma Conservation Commission coordinates the AML program. Retired Natural Resources Conservation Service engineers and inspectors accomplish a majority of the technical assistance for the AML program.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, along with our partner the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, meet quarterly to coordinate AML and RAMP, schedule priorities, and address other issues. This has resulted in an excellent means of communication and coordination between the two programs.

Small, But Successful Special Initiative

In 1997, one of only eight projects across the nation, the Natural Resources Conservation Service was provided with \$198,000 of Rural Abandoned Mine Program funds for a special demonstration project to showcase the cooperative efforts between the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the state Abandoned Mine Land (AML) program. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has entered into five RAMP land user contracts in Rogers County. The Natural Resources Conservation Service completed the designs on four of the projects; AML has designed one. The Natural Resources Conservation Service and AML personnel have incorporated the designs, construction drawings, and specifications for the five projects into one construction contract that is being administered by using the State of Oklahoma contracting procedures.

AML is administering the contract and providing construction inspection. Engineering services are provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. This project demonstrates effective and efficient resource usage from both agencies, and provides reclamation on the land in a timely manner. All construction was completed in 1999.

This partnership agreement was awarded the "Mid-Continent Reclamation Award" in 1999 by the Office of Surface Mining. A second partnership agreement was initiated in 1998 to accomplish additional reclamation work in Rogers County, Oklahoma.

Hazard To Life

These abandoned surface mines pose an "attractive nuisance" to young people and others for swimming, fishing, etc. Location of abandoned mines next to county roads has resulted in vehicle accidents. The presence of the pits poses a life threatening risk to Oklahomans of all ages. The majority of these pits are located in Oklahoma's fastest growing county, Rogers County. Individuals are purchasing and developing home sites adjacent to these pits. The cost of addressing these problems will surely rise as the fast pace of development continues and as public safety hazard grows.

Current Status and Needs

- ☑ There are approximately 120 abandoned mines still in Oklahoma today
- ☑ Estimates for reclamation costs sore to over \$56 million
- ☑ The following projects are designed and ready for contracting, pending approval of funds.
Legg Project (\$200,000), McCurtain West (\$250,000), Martin (\$38,000), and Nelson (\$50,000) for a total of \$538,000.

KINTA GIRL DROWNS SATURDAY



A Kinta girl drowned Saturday, June 11, in a strip pit one mile north of that community on Highway 2. Romaine Martin, 12, drowned around 7:45 p.m. as she and several other young people were swimming in the pit. Apparently at least two others were in trouble as well, but were rescued. Repeated efforts to rescue Romaine were unsuccessful, however. Her body was later recovered by the Oklahoma Lake Patrol.

Services were held Wednesday, June 15, at 2 p.m., at the Kinta High School Auditorium. Officiating at the service was Rev. Milton Hulbert, assisted by Rev. Ted Fulsom and Rev. Cudjo. Burial was in Paradise Cemetery under the direction of Smith Funeral Home in Checotah.

Born July 14, 1981, in Muskogee, Romaine would have been an eighth grader at Kinta this fall.

Linda Shaffer, a secretary at Kinta School, says Romaine was a good friend of her daughter's and the news came as quite a shock for their family. "She was a real sweet little girl - always smiling - an all-around good kid," Shaffer said.

Romaine was active in the Big Brother, Big Sister Program, was an honor student and was very active in sports and the D.A.R.E. program.

Survivors include her mother and stepfather, Estelle and Harry Mills, Kinta; her father, Alonco Martin, Muskogee; one sister, Charamaine Brooks, Kinta; one brother, Alonco Martin, Jr., Kinta; grandparents, Ida Pearl Lovelace, Bilo Williams, Kinta, Gladys and Bennie Crumpton, Muskogee, and Eugene Colbert, Checotah; and great-grandparents, Mary Jane and Anthaw Williams of Checotah; and a host of other relatives and friends.

Pallbearers were Keyco Mills, Larry Walker, Quin Hogan, Ricky Glover, C.C. Lovelace, Tyson Martin and Johnny Jackson.

Honorary pallbearers were Early Woodmore, Jr., Craig Lovelace, Bill Lee, Oliver Martin, Arnold Walters and Arnold Simon.

Flowerbearers were April Stephenson, Temeca Foster, Juanita Martin and Tina Tucker.

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